

N E W S R E L E A S E

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\$500,000 Grant Launches Innovation Project to Boost Northern California Economy

SACRAMENTO – A \$500,000 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant was awarded to the Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC) to help kick-start innovation efforts in ten Northern California counties. The grant will help launch a Virtual Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) project designed to bring investors together with entrepreneurs to in order to integrate workforce and economic development.

“The Virtual WIRED project will bring together a partnership of public sector agencies with investment groups that can assist small business development, provide workers an opportunity to learn new skills and compete for available jobs,” said Victoria Bradshaw, Secretary of the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA). “This grant will be used to establish a network of Venture Capital investment groups ready to invest in locally based businesses suited for fast growth that have regional, national or international product distribution.”

In addition to the \$500,000 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant from the state, NoRTEC is receiving an initial \$500,000 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to launch the WIRED project. The consortium will receive another \$4.5 million in federal WIRED funds once it completes an implementation plan.

The partnership consists of NoRTEC, local economic development entities, and small business development centers that will identify, direct and/or refer entrepreneurs and small businesses to the appropriate investment group. NoRTEC will also be responsible for building an Internet-based tracking system to measure efforts, utilization, referrals and outcomes during the project.

“This partnership is an investment in the future of the local economy in northern California”, said Bradshaw. “The expectation is that this process will lead to better understanding of partnership roles and better coordination of efforts, providing a solid foundation for staff development and business/employee training.”

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"We are excited about the opportunities this recognition and funding will provide," Charles Brown, executive director of NoRTEC said. "We all know how important entrepreneurs and small businesses are to our economy. This will allow us to develop a comprehensive support system to help small businesses grow."

Earlier this year, DOL designated 13 WIRED regions across the United States, one of them a project led by the California Space Authority, and then designated 13 Virtual WIRED regions. The difference is that Virtual regions will pursue more creative funding opportunities. NoRTEC's proposal was designated as a Virtual WIRED region.

State funding for the project comes from the Governor's WIA 15 percent discretionary funds administered by the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency's Employment Development Department.

Ten northern California counties, Butte, Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity, will make up the initial Virtual WIRED region. As additional funding becomes available, NoRTEC intends to add additional northern California counties.

For additional information on this project, please contact NoRTEC Executive Director Charles Brown at (530) 872-9600.

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